

FREIGHT

JOURNAL

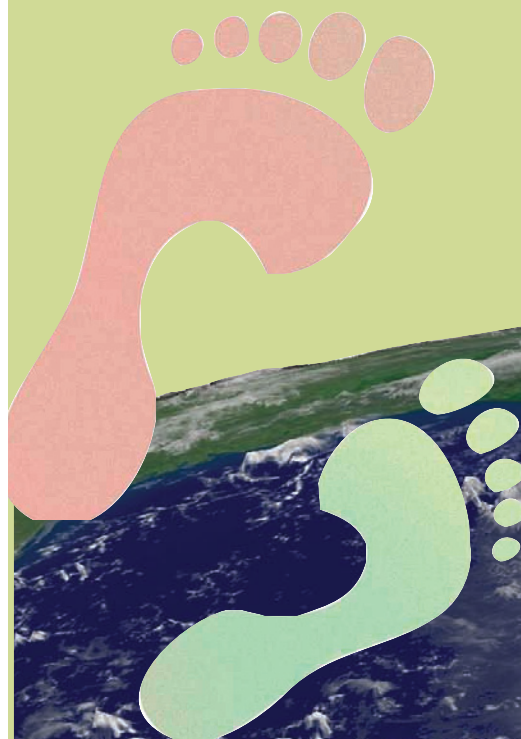
Summer 2007



- Bosses say railways are vital for freight
- Road transport contributes 93% of all transport emissions.
- Rail freight can make the difference

Climate Change:

Rail freight can reduce carbon footprint



Network Rail has announced upgrades of several lines for freight to link with the planned capacity expansion of ABP on the Humber, with a two-berth container terminal, an expanded paper terminal and another bulk coal terminal, to add to the 9.5m tonnes a year bulk coal terminal opened last year.

The six mile long Hull Docks branch capacity is being increased from 10 to 22 trains per day. NR will relay Hessle Road junction and double track at both ends of the branch. ABP is spending £1.2 m on track and signalling on the Immingham side, and the Brigg line is to be upgraded to take most of the coal trains heading south.

Funding for the Hull schemes is coming from Yorkshire Forward, the Northern Way and ABP as well as from Network Rail itself.

Climate Change: rail freight can make the

Earlier this month, the Government published a consultation on its draft Climate Change Bill. If implemented, this Bill will commit the UK to statutory targets for reducing carbon emissions by 26-32% by 2020 and 60% by 2050. There is of course much debate on whether this is sufficiently stringent, whether there should be annual targets and such like which may alter the final wording, but nonetheless this is a step forward in Government commitment.

Transport is of course acknowledged as one of the more difficult sectors to tackle without impinging on economic growth. A recent publication by ATOC (www.atoc.org) shows

that transport is responsible for around 23% of UK CO₂ emissions of which passenger transport is around 14.5%, and freight transport 8.8%. Of the latter, rail freight is estimated to produce 0.2%. And various studies show rail freight to be between 4 and 10 times better than road freight in carbon emissions.

Why then is there so little action to promote modal shift to rail? Other recent Government documents pay it little or no attention – DEFRA's consultation on carbon trading suggested that rail electric traction should be captured under carbon trading whilst road diesel was excluded, and a recent consultation on use of biofuel makes no attempt to



encourage use in the rail sector.

There is as yet no sign of appraisal techniques accepting Stern's recommendation on the cost of carbon – considerably higher than those used today. And is No 10 'going soft' on road pricing after the ill fated website consultation? More alarmingly we are yet again facing the threat of government

Bottom of the Kyoto class must do better!



Professor Jacqueline McGlade, Executive Director of the EEA

The European Environment Agency (EEA) has published a report on greenhouse gas emissions in which they argue that emissions from transport remain a key, but avoidable, obstacle to the EU reaching its Kyoto climate change targets.

The EEA report, 'Transport and Environment: on the way to a new common transport policy', says that European transport policy must deal with spiralling demands for transport. Between 1990 and 2003, passenger transport volumes in the EEA countries grew by 20%. Air transport grew the most, 96%, during this period.

While emissions from most other sectors (energy supply, industry, agriculture, waste management) dropped between 1990 and 2004, emissions from transport increased substantially, driven by this increase in demand.

Transport is responsible for 21% of total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the EU-15, excluding international aviation and maritime transport, road transport contributes 93% of the total of all transport emissions. However, emissions from international aviation are growing fastest with an increase of 86% between 1990 and 2004.

'By suggesting that we simply deal with the environmental impacts of transport, the mid term review of the 2001 White Paper on Transport could be interpreted as a softening of Europe's line on the need to deal with transport volumes.

This cannot be the case,' said Professor Jacqueline McGlade, Executive Director of the EEA.

'We cannot deal with the increasing GHG emissions, noise pollution and landscape fragmentation caused by transport without dealing with the increasing traffic across the spectrum: on our roads and railways, in the air and by sea. Technical advances, such as cleaner, more fuel efficient engines are very important but we cannot innovate our way out of the emissions problem from transport,' she said.

The report also highlights the significant role that transport subsidies play in terms of directing transport choices. Between 270 and 290 billion Euros are spent annually in Europe in transport subsidies. Almost half of these subsidies go to road transport, one of the least environmentally friendly modes. The EEA will release a detailed study of transport subsidies in March 2007. Pollution from transport is also having a direct effect on our health. Almost 25% of the EU population live less than 500 meters from a road carrying more than three million vehicles per year. Consequently, almost four million life-years are lost each year due to high pollution levels, the report says.



AIN'T NO MOUNTAIN HIGH ENOUGH

Network Rail recently published its 2007 Business Briefing setting out a vision for the future. Freight of course comes at the end, but the text is still illuminating. 'It is not efficient to haul freight over hills'. What do they propose? Flatten the hills? Switzerland seems to manage quite well with hills but, like snow and frost precautions, we suppose they have so many of them that it

Rail freight operators' finan

Company	Turnover
EWS International	£21.9m
DRS	£27.8m
GBRF	£27.8m
Freightliner Heavy Haul	£80.6m
Freightliner Intermodal	£155.7m
EWS	£485.3m

The difference



allowing longer and heavier lorries, undermining rail's business and threatening modal shift back to road.

The Freight RUS shows us that capacity exists today for new rail freight services and, where routes are congested, relatively modest amounts of investment allow growth to continue.

makes it worth while to make proper provisions for coping with them.

'Lighter freight such as container trains will move faster, at around 90 mph to slot between evening passenger trains'. Fine, but what is so special about evening passenger trains? Can container trains not slot in between morning or even mid-day passenger trains?

'This will avoid loops and sidings which represent weak points on our network' – only because they are not maintained properly nor given higher turnout speeds. '...and we will get freight trains to their destinations before our weeknight (sic) possession work starts'. No mention of developing single line working to provide for a 24/7 railway which is actually what the customers and operators want.

We're not sure how impressed the freight business will be with this Briefing!

Financial reports

Company	Operating	% profit
Freightliner	(£17.6m)	(80.4%)
Intermodal	£1.4m	5.0%
Waggon	£1.9m	6.8%
Waggon	£10.9m	13.5%
Waggon	£11.2m	7.2%
Waggon	£4.7m	1.0%

Freightliner Intermodal

Well that time has come and gone for us at Freightliner Intermodal when we negotiated a new two year pay deal. Our pay anniversary date was 1st January 07 and after long protracted negotiations, going back to Sept 2006, we delivered a deal that we felt we could take to our fellow drivers.

This decision was vindicated when our colleagues voted in favour, by almost three to one, to accept the deal in April this year. This will take an Intermodal Driver's salary to more than £35,000 on 1-01-08 with no loss of conditions.

This is in sharp contrast to the other FOCs who have increased their driver's responsibilities and productivity. This is reflected in their higher salary compared with Intermodal's.

As three of the negotiating team also drive for Freightliner we understood the feelings of the drivers. The difficulty we have as negotiators is getting the balance between pay and productivity – or rather, not giving up our conditions. And to this end we have been relatively successful.

Many of the drivers that I spoke to had stated that they wanted to keep their conditions. Many drivers come to Intermodal not for the rate of pay but primarily for the conditions.

In the six years that I have been on the Business Council we have managed to maintain our conditions and indeed have, in some respects, improved on them.

We now have a 4 day, 35 hour week over the roster cycle; we have negotiated back lieu days for bank & public holidays which we had lost in the original Driver Restructuring Initiative. We are currently in discussions with management on a range of issues including an ill health protection scheme, career breaks & job share.

I have also been attending the new Freight Forum at Aslef HQ with the General Secretary, Lead Officers, Executive Committee members and Company Councils of the other FOCs. I think this has been a successful initiative from the Executive, as it addresses the problems the FOCs have in the freight sector of the industry. This gives representatives from all the FOCs an opportunity to get together to meet and discuss problems within the industry and ways to resolve them – just look at the high profile of the SQUASH Campaign and the Class 66 locos.

I see this as a positive step forward as it is quite apparent that whatever freight operator we work for, as ASLEF drivers, we are facing similar problems.

This is why I try to encourage members of all the FOCs & TOCs to attend their Branch to use their voice to address the problems they face in the workplace, because we have more in common with Drivers in other FOCs than some of our members realise!

However, it is alarming that the competition in the freight sector is resulting in one FOC's success in securing a new contract at the detriment of another FOC losing the same contract.

Let's not forget our main competitors should be road transport and the road lobby, and to this end we have to keep up the pressure on our campaign for Freight on Rail.

We currently have a Government that makes the right noises about increasing freight on rail yet they have reduced the freight grant to Intermodal by £5 million, as well as increasing track access charges for the freight companies. We have to challenge and change this mindset of the Government.

So let's keep up the good fight and campaigning for more freight on rail and improved conditions and job security within the freight sector.

Yours fraternally,

Jamie Fallon, Freightliner Intermodal Business Council Secretary.



GB Railfreight Company Council Report

2007/10 Pay Deal:

A joint working party was set up in July 2006 to prepare a response to any forthcoming pay offer from GB Railfreight. This consisted of Tim Humphries, North West local Rep, Jim Bloomfield, South and East local rep, and myself Jim Clark, company council secretary. We set out in the first instance to target conditions of service, rather than a headline figure.

Over the next six months we agreed a pay offer with GB Railfreight which we felt confident about putting to the ASLEF Executive Committee and the members, via a referendum. The salient points of it were:

1. An increase in salary of £1,400 per year, giving drivers an annual salary of £44,200 from 1 April 2009, assistant train managers ranging from £24,860-£26,162, ATM(P) £23,519-£24,752 and terminal operators on £18,778 from the same date. A year on year percentage increase of 3.5%, 3.38% and 3.27%

or RPI for the preceding February in each year plus 0.5%.

2. A joint working party to be setup to consider and implement the following:
 - a. An ill health severance package.
 - b. A promotion, transfer and redundancy agreement.
 - c. A rostering agreement.
 - d. A review of the partnership agreement.
 - e. A staff travel scheme.
 - f. A private healthcare package.
3. The extension of the final salary pension scheme.
4. An increase in paternity leave from five to eight days.
5. An increase in maternity leave to 10 weeks with 100% salary

There was a caveat from the management that the pay offer was conditional upon a rest day working agreement for the length of the pay deal. This was also the case with the 2004/07 deal.

We submitted our report to the Executive committee at their session on 14 March, with Andy Morrison as lead officer and myself in attendance. The EC

decided that a three year extension to RDW was unacceptable and therefore we would have to return to the April session without it as part of the pay deal. After further discussions with management the caveat was withdrawn. Andy Morrison and I attended the April 17th EC session where the EC adopted a resolution to ballot members with a recommendation for acceptance.

Pay Offer Referendum:

The 2007/10 pay offer was put to ballot with a closure date of May 14th 2007. The results were as follows:

127 ballots issued
Yes = 70 (70.7%)
No = 29 (29.3%)

No spoiled papers

The offer was thus formally accepted

Specially monitored Drivers:

The joint working party were approached by GB Railfreight's head of Operational Standards, Mr Karl Watts, asking for a meeting to be setup, which was duly agreed to. At the meeting GB Railfreight outlined their plans for

SMD, stating that it was their intention to combine it with the competence management system, moving away from a points system and adopting industry best practice.

Although the process is at an early stage further meetings are envisaged for mid June.

Rest Day Working:

On the same day that we attended the EC with the pay offer we also approached them for an extension to the Rest Day working agreement. Further to considering our report, the EC granted a six month extension, until 27th October 2007, subject to continued monitoring by the GB Railfreight reps.

Class 66 Cabs:

Following a joint working party with management, GB are to carry out the following modifications:

1. Cab seats: Currently on trial on two locos, with all loco seats to be replaced with the new model over the next six months (October 2007).
2. Cab blinds: ordered for all locos and due to be installed by the beginning of June 2007.

Business bosses say Railways are vital for freight



BRITAIN'S leading business bosses have warned that rail freight must be at the forefront of transport policies.

The British Chambers of Commerce say the rail network should be used by the freight industry to cut its carbon footprint and improve distribution times. Although rail emits less than 1% of the UK's total carbon emissions, compared to 21% from road transport, only 12% of the UK's surface freight is transported by rail.

David Frost, director general of the British Chambers of Commerce, said: "Rail freight offers an energy efficient mechanism to transport goods across the country yet the ambitions of all are held back by the recent lack of investment there has been in the transport network for freight. We recognise that it will not be cheap to make all the necessary changes yet ad hoc tinkering to the infrastructure will not allow the large increase in rail freight

transportation that can be achieved."

Leeds Chamber of commerce formally backed the campaign, arguing that rail freight offers enormous potential for growth, but at the moment is considered as having "secondary status" behind passenger travel, a standing which must change.

Ian Williams, policy director of Leeds Chamber of Commerce (left), said: "By encouraging the movement of freight from the road network and on to the railways, the Government can take a massive step forward in meeting its carbon reduction targets." He went on to say that "Rail freight offers an energy-efficient mechanism to transport goods across the country, yet the ambitions of all are held back by the recent lack of investment there has been in the transport network for freight."

"We recognise that it will not be cheap to make all the necessary changes. A concerted effort is needed to break the impasse and allow rail freight transportation to meet its potential."

3. Cab air cooling: 66708 currently fitted and undergoing trials during the summer period. If successful there will be a full rollout across the fleet in time for summer 2008.

4. Noise and vibration: HSBC (loco owners) conducted several tests and after an initial review it was deemed that vibration levels are below the 'lower exposure levels.' Horn decibels are to be reduced from 120-125 db to 112-117 db to address the minor noise.

5. Bottled water and wet pipes to remain the same at present.

Joint Working Party:

As well as the SMD process and the Class 66 trial, part of the joint working party remit under the 2007/10 pay award was to take part in discussions, with the various department heads, on implementation of the award. These talks are ongoing with significant progress made on a rostering procedure and some leeway on the staff travel front. Full details will be published as and when they are signed off.

JIM CLARK

16 railway enhancements to reduce the size of transport's carbon footprint

Britain's rail freight operators have outlined 16 core railway enhancements that will facilitate growth in rail freight and help reduce the size of transport's carbon footprint.

The High Level Output Specification (HLOS) that is being produced by the Department for Transport is mainly orientated towards the needs of the passenger railway. There is, however, a need for the HLOS to recognise the recommendations of the Eddington report and the need to enhance transport capacity related to urban, inter-urban and international gateway traffic.

The Rail Freight Operators' Association, whose members are the four main rail freight companies (EWS, Freightliner, Direct Rail Services and GB Railfreight), have identified 16 schemes that would contribute to Eddington's findings and have been submitted formally to the Department for Transport for inclusion in the HLOS.

The schemes announced for Transport Innovation Fund ("TIF") funding by the Department for Transport in December 2006 are a starting point for rail freight, and form part of the 16 schemes:

- Capacity enhancements on the rail routes from the South Humberside ports
- Capacity and gauge enhancement for 9' 6" containers between Barking and Gospel Oak and Willesden in North London
- A chord line near Liverpool to allow direct access to Liverpool Docks
- Gauge enhancement for 9' 6" containers between Southampton and the West Midlands
- Gauge and capacity enhancements for 9' 6" containers between Peterborough and the West Midlands

These schemes will allow rail freight growth and are strongly orientated towards the movement of deep sea containers. They will not meet all rail freight enhancements required from the national network such as capacity (as opposed to gauge) from deep sea ports, gauge enhancement for Continental traffic, accommodating longer and heavier trains and relieving congestion in major conurbations.

The Rail Freight Operators' Association has devised a series of additional schemes that would benefit from inclusion in the HLOS. These increase the capacity and capability of the national rail network, allow an increase in freight services and help productivity. In addition, they will help the environment by allowing more freight to be captured by rail and provide better connection to the UK's international gateways.

Graham Smith, EWS Planning Director and Chairman of the Rail Freight Operators' Association, said: "Recent research has shown that a tonne of freight moved by rail creates five times less Carbon Dioxide than the same tonne being moved on the roads. Rail freight is also up to fifteen times better than road in terms of other noxious emissions. If we wish to reduce the size of transport's carbon footprint, the fast route to this is increasing rail freight. With 50% growth in rail freight by 2014, these 16 schemes provide the capacity to meet that growth and reduce the size of transport's carbon footprint."

EWS is considering required freight enhancements in Scotland, as these are outside the HLOS produced by the Department for Transport. These will be put forward to Transport Scotland and the Scottish Executive for consideration.

For full details of the 16 railway enhancements visit the ASLEF website.

Freight transport in Wales must do better

Freight transport remains the Cinderella of UK industry, with insufficient investment and planning for its needs. The Welsh Assembly, together with the UK Government and local authorities throughout the UK, must exhibit a better understanding of the needs of the freight industry and take actions to support improved performance, to the benefit of both the people and the economy of Wales.

These comments were made by Richard Turner, Chief Executive of the Freight Transport Association, speaking in Cardiff at the Welsh National Transport Conference.

Mr Turner said that the industry itself had made enormous performance developments over recent years. It had become more efficient, moving more goods in fewer vehicles and journeys, making savings on fuel consumption, emissions and reduced empty running. But there was a limit to the extent of future improvements without public investment and sympathetic planning.

There was a national need for increased investment in both road and rail infrastructure following years of failure by successive governments in maintaining investment levels consistent with growth in the economy and the increased vehicle population.

Mr Turner said, 'The forthcoming Wales Freight Strategy must be designed to consider the needs for smoother access to towns and cities by lorries and other delivery vehicles. The Strategy must appreciate the importance to both industry and the consumer

Forth Bridge to close for improvements

Network Rail has announced plans to close the Forth Rail Bridge in Scotland, between Edinburgh and Inverkeithing Junction in Fife, in July for work that will improve Fife's rail infrastructure and reliability.

David Simpson, Network Rail route director said: "Network Rail is ambitious to grow the railway in Scotland and this work will enhance performance for both passenger and freight trains."

DRS Company Council Freight Report

When we, the company council reps for Direct Rail Services (DRS), were given the opportunity to contribute to the freight journal quite a few discussions took place on what to include.

DRS have been operating freight services for 10 years now and been in a trade union agreement with ASLEF since 2001. The two council reps, aided by local health and safety reps in most depts, cover almost 150 members of traincrew. This number seems to be growing on a monthly basis and we seem to be continuously recruiting – around 90% of traincrew are ASLEF members.

The company covers the majority of nuclear traffic, but in recent years have also taken on Intermodal and rail head treatment for Network Rail.

Further to reading the spring Freight Journal, we would like to echo the sentiments of the EWS report. Freight traincrew find themselves in a peculiar position, whereby different FOCs challenge each other for existing and new contracts. This of course leads to uncertainty amongst traincrew, with regards to their employment and livelihoods. In an ideal world there

would be more than enough work to be spread around to ease any fears of enforced redundancies amongst ASLEF members. To that end, the freight forum must be able to produce guarantees for traincrew, as far as their employment is concerned. We are all ASLEF members and should be working together.

SQUASH Campaign:

We, along with some of our health and safety reps, have been in dialogue with the company on ASLEF's SQUASH campaign. On these issues there have been very positive responses to the class 66 problems and the company has been pro-active in attempts to bring cab environments into the twenty-first century. There have been draft suggestions brought forward on cab cooling equipment, noise reduction and cab seating. When these ideas come to fruition they will hopefully provide an acceptable working environment for all our members.

Terms and Conditions:

As with most companies, we have a set of terms and conditions. These are reviewed on a rolling basis and as a company council we are always trying to negotiate for the better good of ourselves and others as train drivers.

Sometimes we achieve this and sometimes not. However, as long as the negotiations are carried out in the spirit intended then most people are content with their lot. Freight drivers are also unique in that, unlike most other drivers, they do not always know when they start and finish duty, as all sorts of delays often occur (note: "stop moaning and get on with report!")

Pay talks:

The company and the unions previously stated that the membership of ASLEF within the company is roughly 90%. We would hope for full membership but know this is not always possible. However, for those of us who are members, we can only state that the places to make your voices heard are branch meetings. As a company council we always welcome debate from the people who have elected us.

Throughout my wide and varied railway career (including very wide and varied uniforms) the only constant has been membership of this union, which I consider to be the best. For the union to flourish we need to keep attending or branches.

I will finish off spouting verbal anaesthetic before I put you all to sleep. Keep the flame burning!

*Yours fraternally,
Bro. T McKendrick
DRS Company Council (North)*





STOP ROAD TRAINS

Rail freight could be halved over the next few years if the Government allows longer heavier lorries on our roads, according to Oxera research. As previously highlighted in the March Locomotive Journal, the Department for Transport is currently reviewing whether to allow trials of super trucks, known as LHV's, which range from 25.5 metres to 30 metres long with weights of 60 to 84 tonnes.

The favoured option, shown in the photo, is the 60-tonne 25.25-metre supertruck which is fifty per cent longer and over a third heavier than existing 44 tonne lorries; the same weight of a Challenger tank and the length of a competition swimming pool.



We have always known that such vehicles would decimate intermodal rail freight but this Oxera research exposes the extent to which the traditional bulk rail freight flows would also be vulnerable.

Oxera analysis of May 2007 found that up to 40 per cent of existing rail freight aggregates traffic and twenty per cent of metals traffic would transfer to road if LHV's were introduced.

At a time when the

Government is committed to reducing carbon emissions it seems perverse to allow trials of vehicles which will decimate intermodal rail freight and significant bulk flows when rail freight has a much better environmental record than road haulage. The fast route to reducing transport's carbon footprint is to increase rail freight. Opinion polls have consistency shown that the public are opposed to larger lorries, find existing HGVs intimidating and would prefer to see freight shifted to the railways.

In addition to undermining rail freight there would be a range of serious environmental and social arguments against LHV's, as discussed below.

Road safety concerns

The impact of these vehicles if they are involved in an accident will be proportionately greater because of their extra weight, with severe implications on braking distances, stability, manoeuvrability at roundabouts for example, possible jack-knifing and overtaking complications. The DfT Focus on Freight Dec 2006 stated that because of their size and weight, when they are involved in accidents the level of injury tends to be higher with HGVs, (this is at the existing weight and

length limits); In emergency situations when reversal may be absolutely essential, such as when vehicles are on fire, and or in a tunnel, on a bridge or in a motorway underpass, it is unclear that LHV's can perform this manoeuvre." Even Bendy buses, which are 18 metres long, cause more than twice as many injuries as any other bus.

Access issues

The safety and social implications of allowing LHV's onto non motorway/dual carriageway roads to access transshipment depots must not be underestimated. This is a massive issue as vehicles of this scale are totally unsuited to non dual carriageway roads, as highlighted by German trials findings, which stated that - There must be no question of allowing the LHV's in urban areas, regional or minor roads, and this must be very strictly enforced.

However, unlike other European countries, the UK allows all vehicles to operate on any road and at any time unless specifically prohibited from doing so and even then it normally allows access.

Lack of compliance

Many HGVs are not following existing road regulations ranging from exceeding speed, weight

and driving hours limits, thus putting the public at extra risk. For example, on major non built up single carriage roads a staggering 76 per cent of articulated HGVs exceeded their 40 mph limit by 6mph on average, with 28 per cent exceeding the limit by more than 10 mph in 2005.

Freight on Rail is campaigning instead for longer heavier trains. If LHV's were not introduced, intermodal rail freight is forecasted to grow by over 60 per cent over the next 10 years according to Network Rail's forecasts.

Take action now please

Please write to the Secretary of State for Transport over the summer (Department for Transport, Great Minster House, 76 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DR), with a copy of the letter to your MP if possible. (House of Commons London SW1A 0AA) as we understand that the Government will be making a decision sometime in September or October. (Visit www.parliament.uk to get the name and address of your MP).

Every letter counts and can be short and sharp and does not need to be beautiful prose. We also ask for your support in highlighting the threat of LHV's over the conference period. Please contact Philippa Edmunds, Freight on Rail Campaigner for more detailed analysis and watch the web site for updates on the campaign. 020 8241 9982:

Philippa@freightonrail.org.uk
www.freightonrail.org.uk

Members are - EWS, Freightliner, Rail Freight Group, RMT, TSSA, ASLEF, UNITE AMICUS, Network Rail and Transport 2000

Europe lags in transfer of freight onto rail

European transport ministers hope a new tunnel will ease the heavy burden of transalpine traffic. The new Lötschberg rail tunnel under the Alps, which was officially opened on Friday, should have a huge impact on the transfer of freight from road to rail. But while transalpine links are an integral part of European Union transport planning, the transfer of goods to the railways is being met with resistance among EU states.

The new 34.6km tunnel, which is set to be fully operational in December, is the longest in Switzerland and the third-longest in the world. The Lötschberg, together with the new Gotthard tunnel, due to open in 2017, forms part of the Swiss New Railway Links through the Alps (NRLA) project. The NRLA has long been part of EU rail plans. Under the bilateral agreements with the EU, Switzerland committed to build the NRLA links, while on its side the EU promised to improve rail connections to the north and to the south.

EU Transport Commissioner Jacques Barrot is a huge fan of the Swiss project: "The Lötschberg is a magnificent example for all those who think that sustainable mobility is just an empty slogan," said Barrot at the tunnel's official opening. "Tomorrow, thanks to the Lötschberg tunnel, the competitiveness of the Rotterdam-Genova route will receive a boost."

Four alpine tunnels

In 2004 the EU named the NRLA a priority project, along with 30 other European transport routes. In the future, the Lötschberg and the future Gotthard tunnels will compete with other new transalpine rail links, such as the Brenner, between Austria and Italy,

and the Mont-Cenis, between France and Italy.

Jacques Barrot's transport spokesman, said of the proposed plans: "The tunnels connect different transport corridors which will scarcely compete with each other. And as for the huge ports of Rotterdam and Antwerp, the obvious route for freight traveling to Italy is



The Lötschberg is the longest rail tunnel in Switzerland and the third-longest in the world – although it will be overtaken by the Gotthard base tunnel, due to open in 2017



via the Swiss tunnels."

However, the transport spokesman also explained that a problem of the Rotterdam-Genova rail route is that Brussels only has a limited controlling influence. The main influence of EU policy on the Rotterdam-Genova rail link has been to quickly liberalise rail freight traffic. Competition has driven down prices and improved offers. But an in-depth study in 2004 by the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure

Companies (CER) gave a rather mixed picture. The volume of goods transported on the Rotterdam-Genova rail link has increased by 5-10% but the line only represented one-fifth of the market share for freight. In Switzerland, the transfer from road to rail is also slower than expected. On the Swiss section of the Rotterdam-Genova rail route, the percentage of freight transported by rail increased from 63% in 2003 to 66% in 2006. This is explained in particular by Switzerland's heavy-duty vehicle road taxes, which are much higher than in the EU. But CER spokesman, Elke Schänzler claims the EU should follow the Swiss example: "Until now, the community has placed more importance on the free movement of goods than on taxing heavy-duty vehicles for environmental reasons. "The climate debate should change things. If the EU really wants to meet its ambitious climate objectives, much greater efforts can be expected to transfer freight onto Europe's more environmentally friendly trains."

